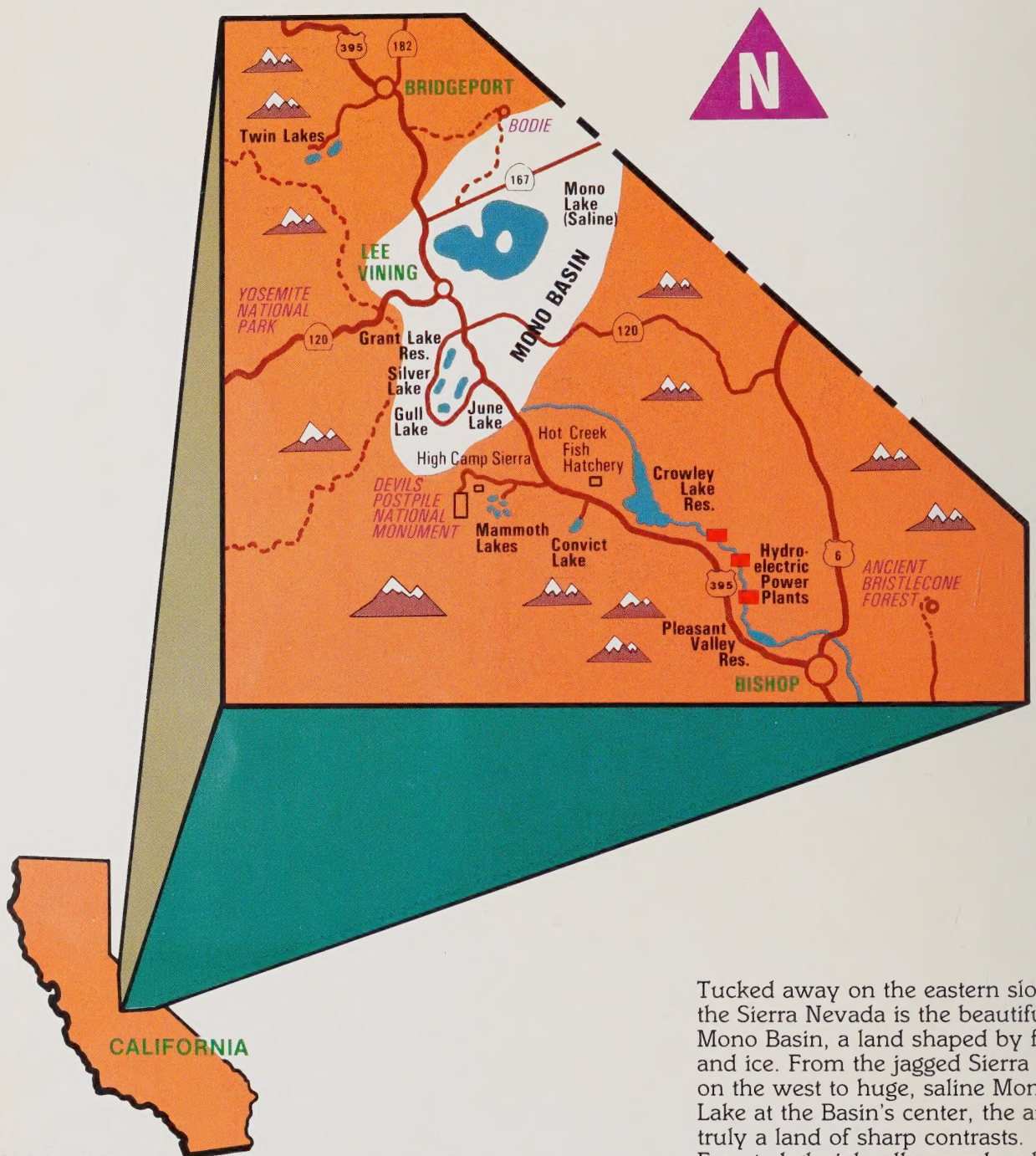




MONO BASIN



Tucked away on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada is the beautiful Mono Basin, a land shaped by fire and ice. From the jagged Sierra peaks on the west to huge, saline Mono Lake at the Basin's center, the area is truly a land of sharp contrasts. Forested glacial valleys and rushing streams can be found just a few miles from rolling desert terrain and dormant volcanos.

Fresh water lakes and streams, alive with trout, beckon anglers to some of the best fishing in the Sierra before becoming important sources of water and energy for millions of Los Angeles residents. Sitting at the back door to Yosemite, 340 miles north of Los Angeles, many parts of the Mono Basin offer exceptional recreation for all seasons.



*Top/Lee Vining Creek
Bottom/Lee Vining Creek*

Winter or summer, the Mono Basin's most important resource is water, providing the basis for the area's recreation-oriented economy. The Basin receives abundant snowfall during its lingering winter, offering excellent skiing in the June Lake area. When spring finally arrives, the snowpack turns into bubbling streams, filling the area's fresh water

lakes. Although the four lakes in the June Lake Loop area are the favorite trout fishery, thousands of visitors travel into the Sierra backcountry by horse and by foot to explore remote lakes and enjoy the spectacular high-country scenery.

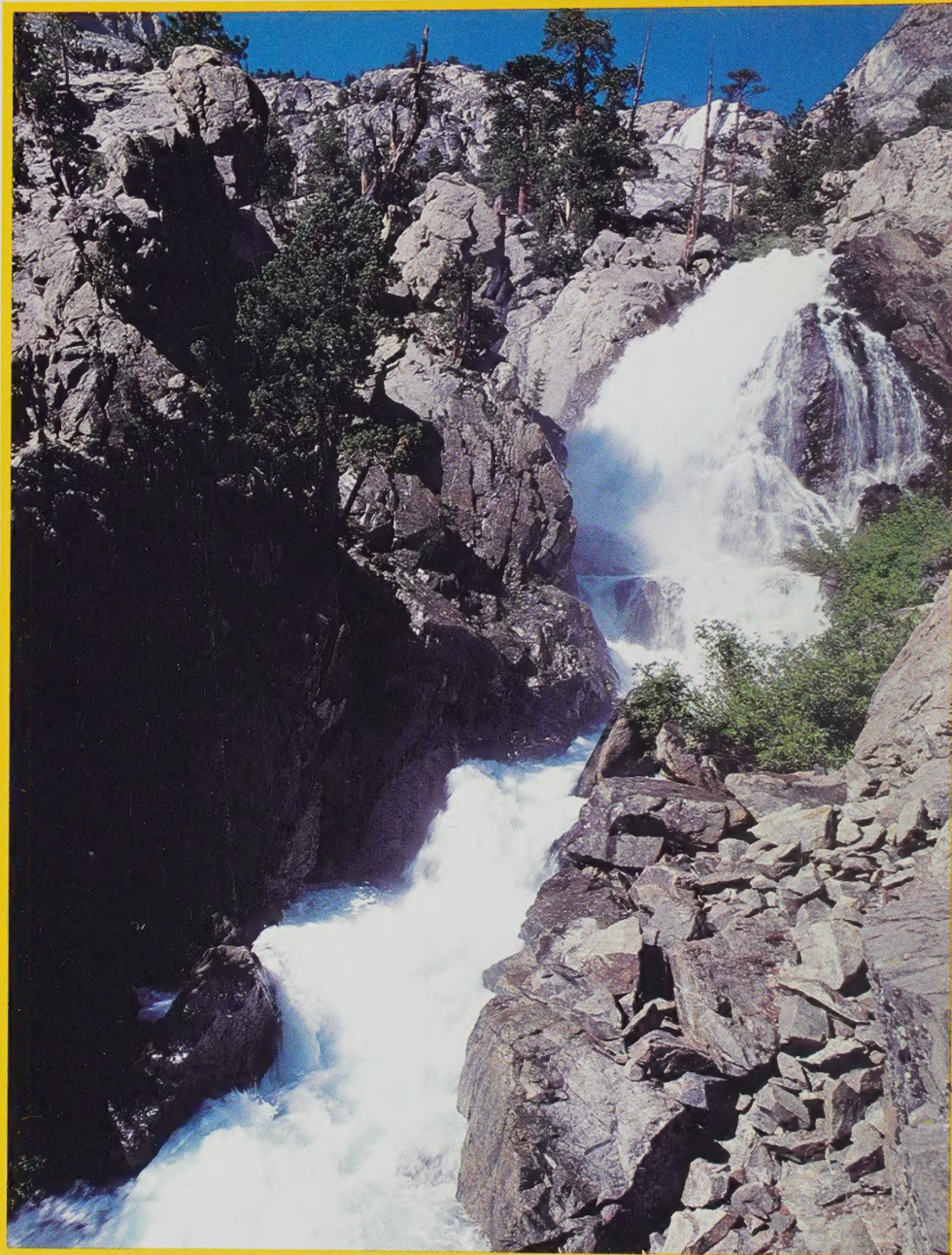
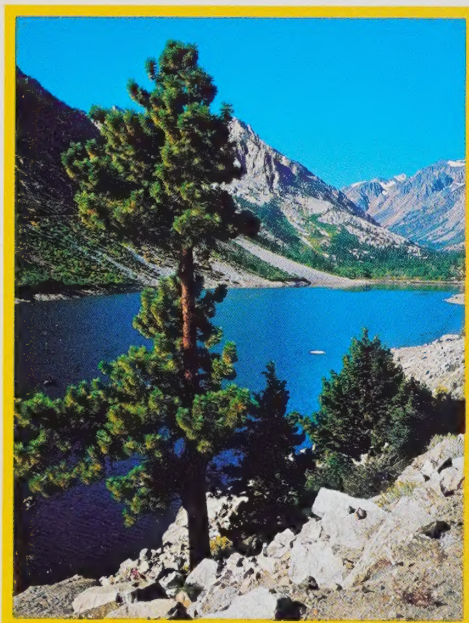
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*Right/June Lake Loop waterfall
Below/Lundy Lake*



Once water enters the Mono Basin as snowfall, there is no natural way it can leave the area, except by evaporation. For hundreds of thousands of years, that evaporation has been taking place at saline Mono Lake where all the fresh water streams naturally empty. Since 1941, four of the five major streams have been diverted into the Los Angeles Aqueduct System for use by Los Angeles residents, commerce and industry. Today, these streams provide nearly 20 percent of the city's water supply, enough for 600,000 persons.

After the water is enjoyed by vacationers for fishing and water sports in many of the region's fine lakes and creeks, the water is diverted into Grant Lake reservoir before flowing from the Mono Basin into the Owens River via an 11.5-mile tunnel. Although an average of 100,000 acre-feet of the natural flow towards Mono Lake is diverted, rainfall, water flowing from Lundy Lake down Mill Creek, other streams and considerable groundwater still provide 70,000 acre-feet of water annually for the saline lake.



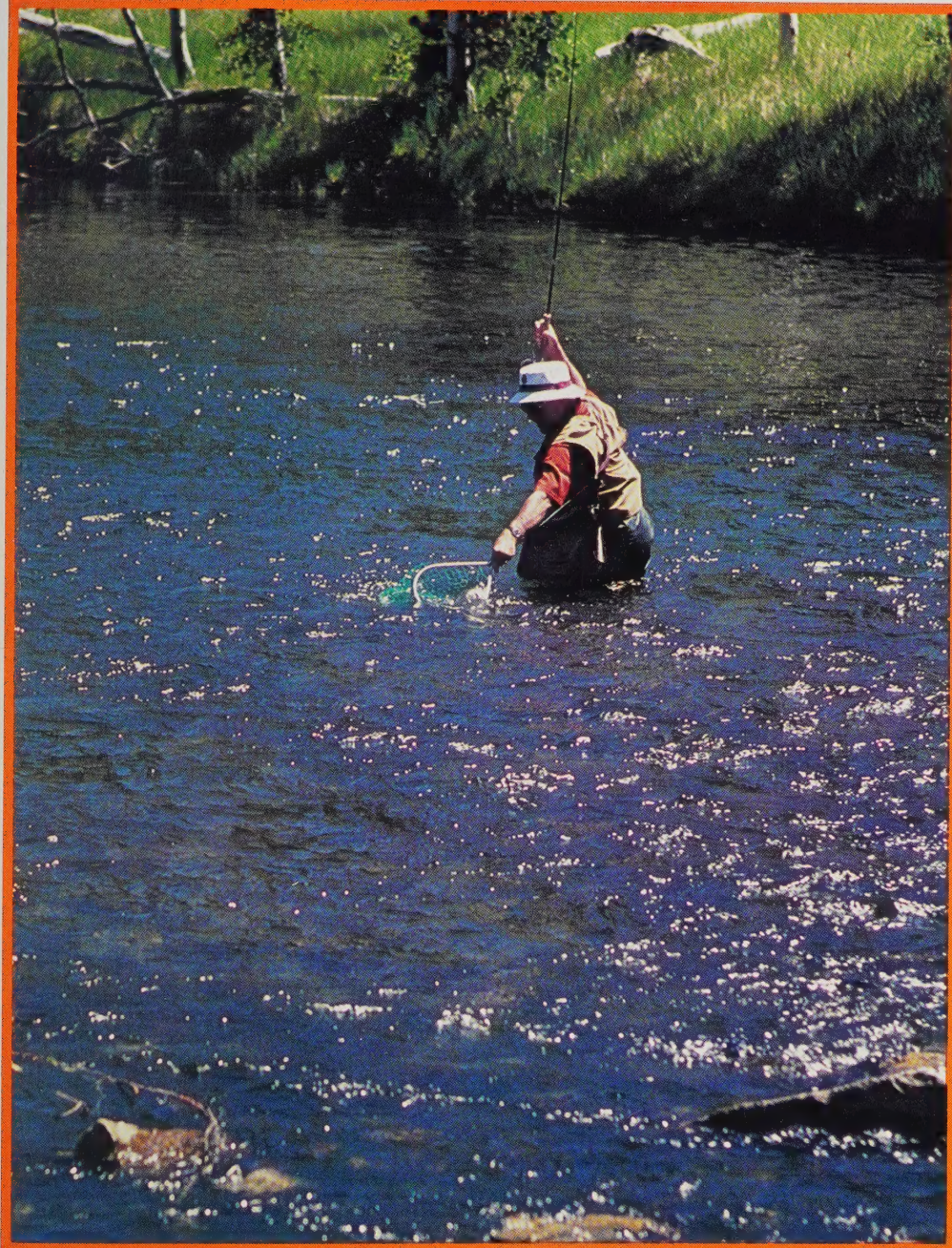
Even after Mono Basin water enters the Los Angeles Aqueduct System, it continues to be a prized recreational resource of the Eastern Sierra as it flows along the Owens River and through reservoirs in the region. In fact, nearly half the water in nearby Crowley Lake originates in the Mono Basin. Although this is the largest Los Angeles reservoir, it is best known as the premium trout fishery in California. On the opening day of fishing season, Crowley Lake attracts more than 11,000 anglers, seeking and finding their trout limits.



*Top/Crowley Lake
Bottom/Owens Gorge Power Plant*

As Mono Basin water flows through the all-gravity city aqueduct, more than 300 million kilowatt hours of electricity are produced annually in hydroelectric power plants, including three located in the rugged Owens River Gorge. During its 7,000-foot drop in elevation to Los Angeles, the water produces energy equivalent to burning 500,000 barrels of oil per year at a thermal electric generating station.

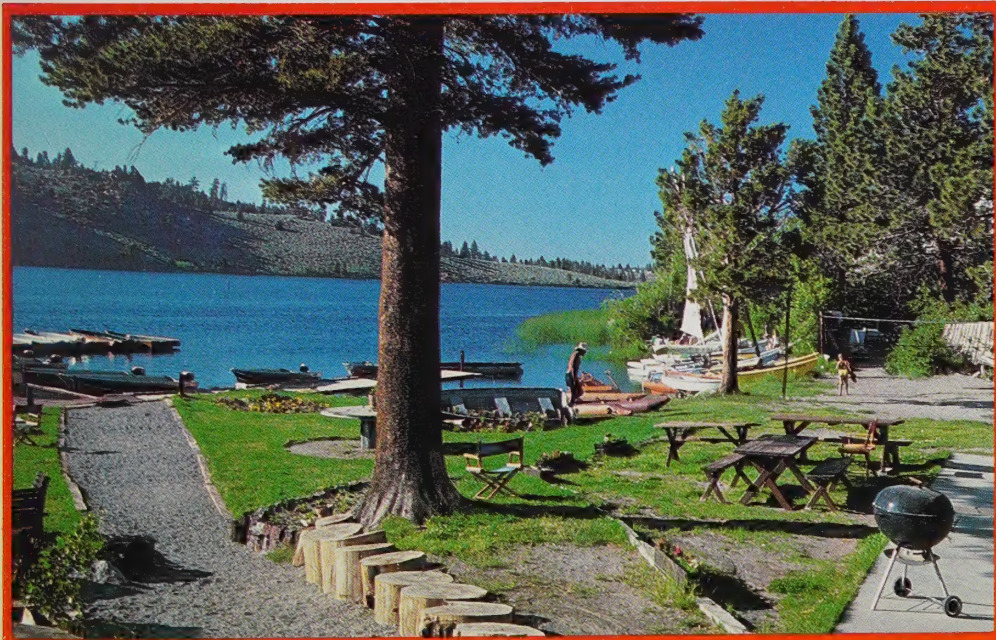
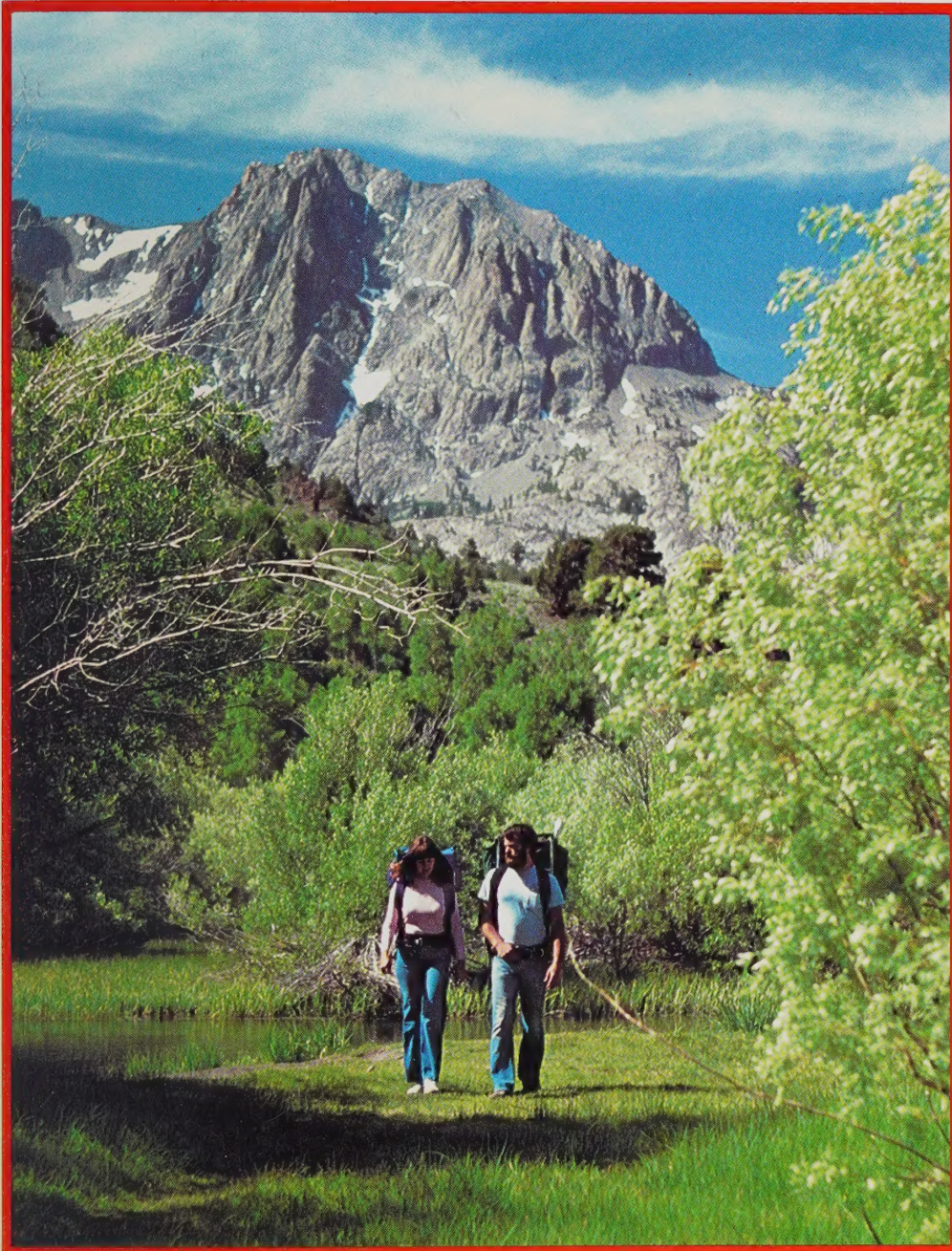




*Facing Page/Walker Lake
Above/Rush Creek*

The Mono Basin offers quiet solitude, a chance to get away from the pressures of daily life. Whether it is a favorite fishing spot along Rush Creek or the splendor of fall colors at isolated Walker Lake, visitors find their time in the Mono Basin a memorable experience.





In the June Lake Loop, anglers have their choice of four lakes, all with easy access for boating. Water flows west toward the Sierra down Reverse Creek from June Lake to Gull Lake and finally into Silver Lake. Along its route from Silver Lake north to Grant Lake, Rush Creek flows past convenient U.S. Forest Service campgrounds which have become very popular for family vacations. A few miles north, campgrounds can be found in picturesque Lee Vining and Lundy Canyons. Marina operators at Loop Lakes and at Lundy Lake offer boat rentals, bait supplies and sage advice on where to find the catch of the day.

*Facing Page/June and Gull Lakes
Above/Hiking along Rush Creek
Left/June Lake*



Warm summer temperatures provide ideal conditions for camping along Rush Creek or basking on the beach at June Lake. For the more hardy, a designated swimming area provides an ideal way for vacationers to cool off in June Lake's cold waters. June Lake Loop lakes also offer sailboating during the summer.

*Left/June Lake swimming beach
Above/Camping near Silver Lake*



From late spring to early fall, the Mono Basin becomes the high country range for more than 20,000 sheep. Los Angeles leases more than 15,000 acres in the Basin for grazing, including about 2,300 irrigated acres of pasture land.

For those who want to journey into the Sierra backcountry, mules and horses still provide the best means of travel. The Eastern Sierra boasts a number of packers' stations, including

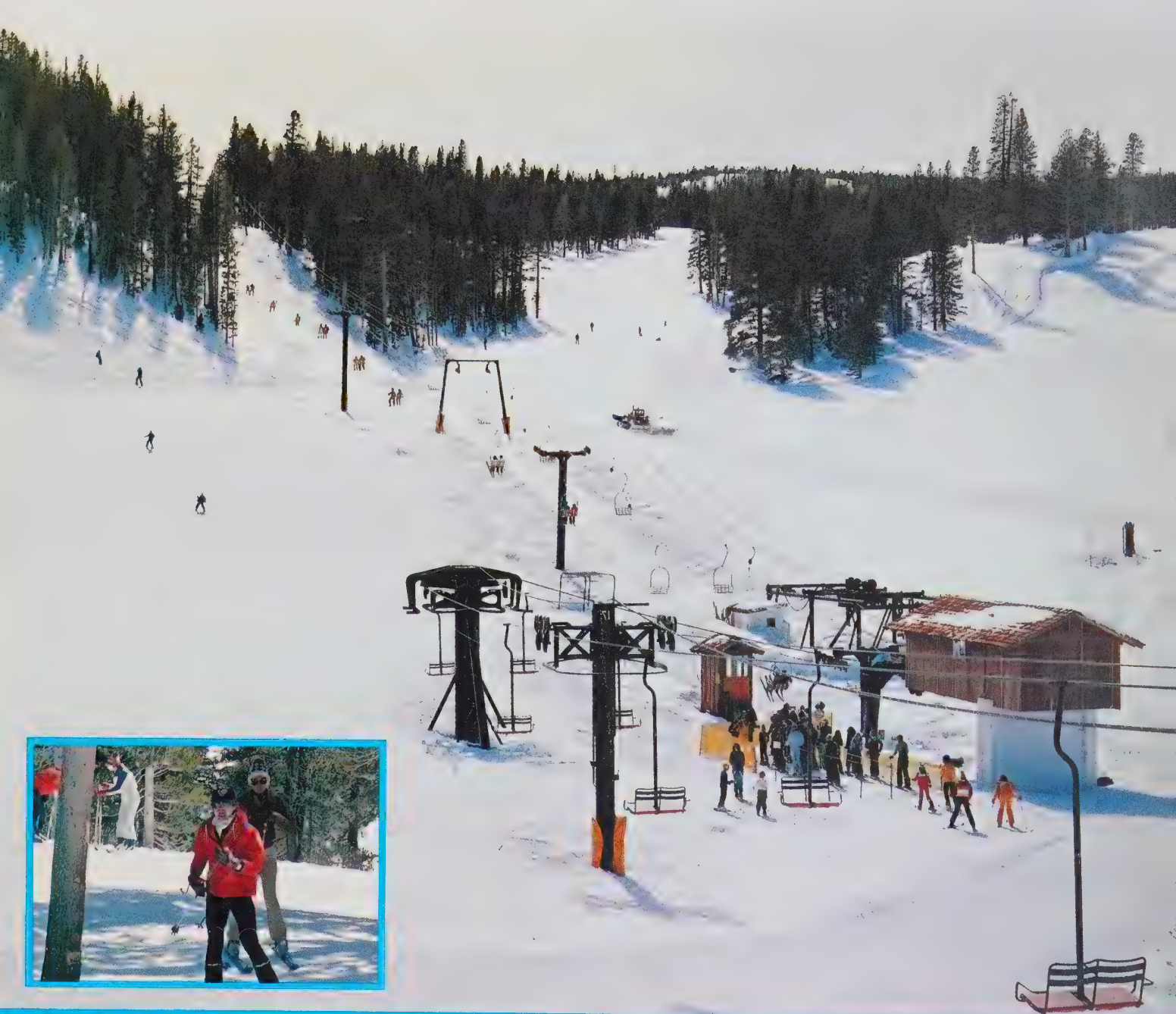
one in the June Lake Loop area, where experienced guides offer trips to isolated lakes and camping areas in the backcountry.

Above/Grant Lake

Below Left/Mono Basin sheep grazing

Below/Horseback riding along Rush Creek





June Mountain becomes the focus of attention for winter sports in the Mono Basin. Five chair lifts and one T-bar provide skiers access to runs ranging from novice to expert on June Mountain. For those interested in cross-country skiing, two trails have been established in the area.

Above/June Mountain skiing



Surrounded by high desert terrain, saline Mono Lake dominates the center of the Mono Basin with its expanse of blue-green water dotted with islands and islets. Without any natural outlet, the lake has become increasingly saline over millennia, making fish life impossible. Although nearly three times as salty as the ocean, Mono Lake is alive with tiny brine shrimp and brine flies which become easy prey for hundreds of thousands of migratory birds, such as grebes and phalaropes, which stop at the lake each year. During spring and summer months, Mono Lake's many islands become a rookery for tens of thousands of nesting California Gulls comprising about 20 percent of the species' world population.

One of the unique features of the Mono Basin is the strangely shaped tufa towers which can be found standing as stone forests along the Mono Lake shoreline. These often massive, yet delicate, calcium carbonate structures were formed wherever a fresh water spring emerged from the lake bottom and produced a chemical reaction with the mineralized lake water. Several groves of tufa towers have been exposed since Los Angeles' diversion of fresh water, beginning in 1941, caused the lake level to decline



gradually. Today, four fresh water streams are diverted into the Los Angeles Aqueduct System to provide nearly 20 percent of the city water supply, enough for 600,000 persons. The lake will stop receding when the amount of water evaporating equals the amount of water flowing into the lake from other streams and groundwater. This will take place in about 100 years, and the lake will still have an area of nearly 40 square miles.



Founded in 1925, the town of Lee Vining sits at the crossroads of US 395, traversing the Eastern Sierra, and the Tioga Pass Road (Highway 120) leading west to the back door of Yosemite National Park and the San Joaquin Valley. Each year, hundreds of thousands of travelers find Lee Vining a welcome haven to stop on their journey through the Eastern Sierra.

*Top/Mono Lake islands
Above Left/Mono Lake tufa towers
Above Right/Lee Vining*



Often called a geologist's dream, the Mono Basin offers a textbook study of glacial action which sculpt the U-shaped canyons of the Eastern Sierra. As late as 20,000 years ago, massive tongues of glacial ice were scouring deep into the Sierra granite to form the picturesque lakes and canyons seen today. Visitors can still see the results of a 2,500-foot thick sheet of ice in Lee Vining Canyon or fish in Reverse Creek, a stream which actually flows toward the Sierra because of glacial action. Volcanic action also has shaped the Mono Basin landscape with the relatively young, 9,000 to 12,000 years old, Mono craters located southerly of Mono Lake.

The lure of gold in the mid-1850s gave the Mono Basin area its first towns and some colorful history. Remnants of that rough-and-tumble mining era still can be seen at nearby Bodie, a ghost town carefully preserved in its natural condition. Although the Mono Basin's mines did not prove as rich as those in the Bodie District, enough mining in the area helped to found the towns of Dogtown Creek in 1857, Monoville in 1859 and Lundy in 1879. Today, all that remains of these early towns are a few ruins and legends.

*Above/Lee Vining Canyon
Top Inset/Mono Craters
Bottom Inset/Bodie Ghost Town*

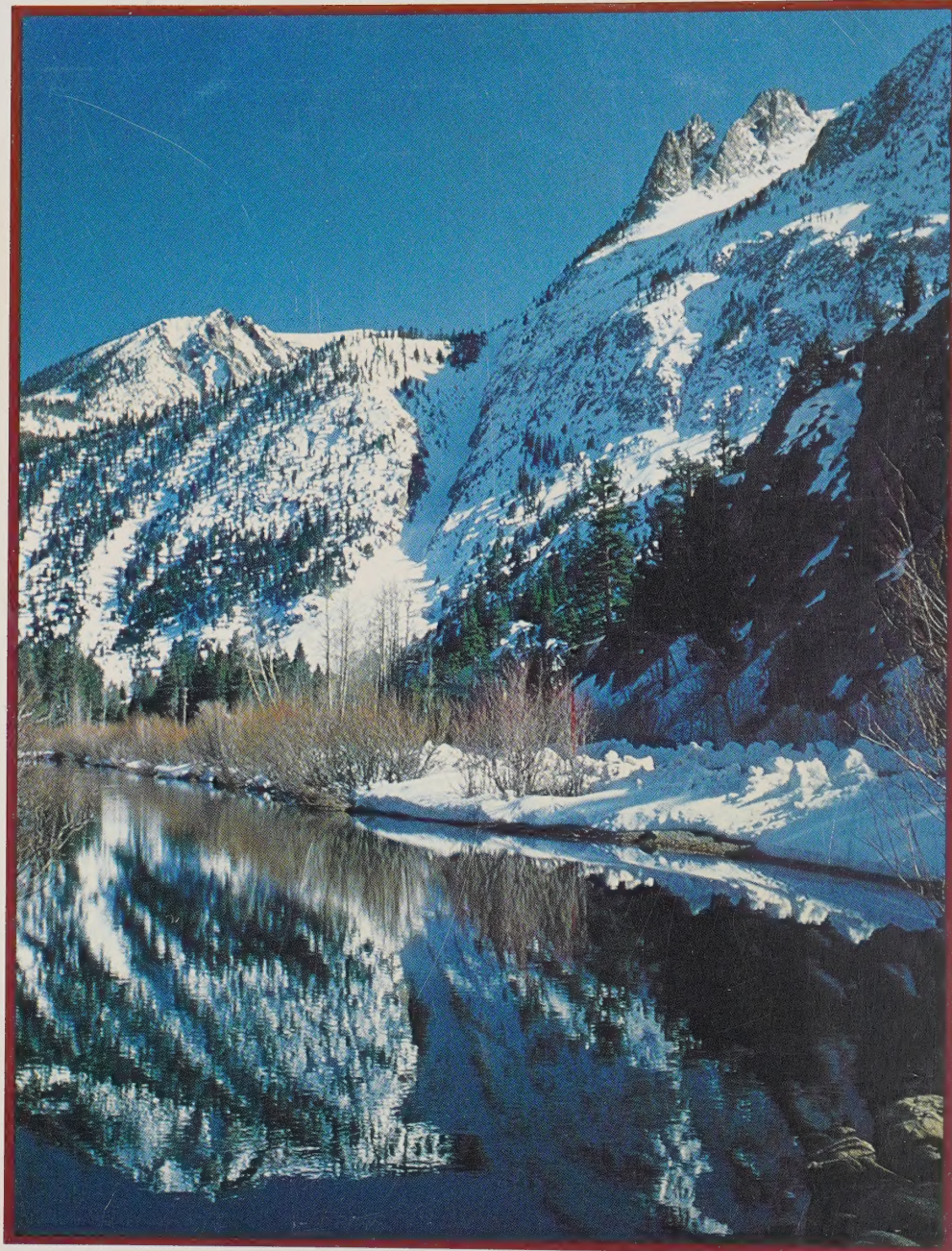


*Top/Walker Lake
Bottom/Grant Lake
Back Cover/Rush Creek*



Autumn comes early in the 6,000 to 8,000-foot elevations of the Mono Basin, turning Quaking Aspen leaves a shimmering yellow in the brisk fall days. Fall is the perfect time for some late season fishing or just watching nature change from summer green to fall orange and gold.

Mono Basin, a region of sharp contrasts and colorful history, supplements its neighboring Owens River watershed and Owens Valley to the south as a recreation paradise for millions of visitors. The Mono Basin snowfall not only provides the area with four-season recreation but also serves as an important water and energy resource for 3 million Los Angeles residents. This picturesque land of contrasts, with vistas changing from open desert terrain to deep forested canyons only a few miles distant, is sure to remain one of the Sierra's most popular natural areas.



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